

# Blindness Education, Screening & Treatment Program Highlights



***A balanced diet, annual eye exam, and following a treatment plan, if necessary, can help save your vision.***

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

## Fiscal Year 2008

### A Year in Review

Subcontracts with Federally Qualified Health Centers provide comprehensive eye screening and referral for treatment for clients without financial means. Services provided during fiscal year 2008 include:

- 1,060 clients screened,
- 127 referred to treatment for diabetic retinopathy,
- 58 referred to treatment for cataracts,
- 38 referred to treatment for glaucoma, and
- 6 referred to treatment for macular degeneration.

## Fiscal Year 2009

### A Status Report

Subcontracts with Federally Qualified Health Centers continue in FY09 and provide comprehensive eye screening and referral for treatment for clients without financial means. Program activity through January 2009 that has been reported to date includes:

- 295 clients screened
- 14 referred to treatment for diabetic retinopathy
- 28 referred to treatment for cataracts
- 10 referred to treatment for glaucoma
- 1 referred to treatment for macular degeneration

In addition, a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Social Services, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, provides for eye screening, diagnosis and treatment for individuals who are financially eligible.

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## Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is one of the leading causes of blindness among individuals 18 years of age and older, according to the National Eye Institute's report, *The Vision Problems in the U.S.*

Diabetic retinopathy can be a complication of diabetes. Vision is impaired and blindness can occur when there is damage to the blood vessels, which can break down, leak or become blocked in the eye. The disease usually affects both eyes. In its early stages, diabetic retinopathy may have no symptoms.

As the disease advances, symptoms may include:

- Spots floating in your vision
- Blurred vision
- Dark streaks or a film that blocks vision
- Poor vision at night
- Vision loss

The longer you live with diabetes, the higher your risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. Therefore, it is important to minimize the risk of developing eye complications such as diabetic retinopathy by:

- Being committed to managing your diabetes-eat healthy, be physically active and take medications as prescribed, if necessary.
- Monitoring your blood sugar level-check your blood sugar level several times a day. You may need to check it more often if you experience a lot of stress or do not feel well. It is also advisable to have a Hemoglobin A1C test at time intervals determined by your doctor.
- Maintaining blood pressure and cholesterol levels within a normal range.
- Stopping tobacco use.

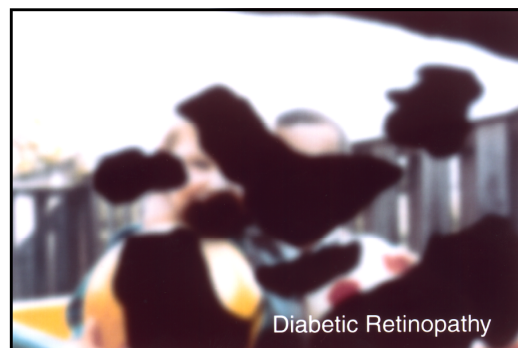
- Taking stress seriously and setting limits for yourself by prioritizing tasks and using relaxation techniques.

**Be proactive with your health.** Taking an active role in managing your diabetes can help prevent eye complications. It is equally important to detect diabetic retinopathy early to minimize its impact on your vision. If you have diabetes, be sure to have an annual dilated eye exam even if you can see normally.

If you have been diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy it is important to continue to follow prevention recommendations to help minimize damage to the eyes. Depending on the stage of the disease, laser surgery or vitrectomy may be necessary to help stabilize vision.

More information can be found at:

- Diabetic retinopathy: [www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy.asp](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy.asp)
- Diabetes and management: [www.diabetes.org/food-nutrition-lifestyle/lifestyle-prevention.jsp](http://www.diabetes.org/food-nutrition-lifestyle/lifestyle-prevention.jsp)
- Talking to your doctor: [www.nei.nih.gov/health/talktodoc.asp](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/talktodoc.asp)



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with diabetic retinopathy.

Source:  
National Eye Institute, National Institute of Health, Ref EDS04